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VACA VALLEY RADIO CLUB

VACAVILLE, CALIFORNIA

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April 2008

Message from the President

By Jerry Olive, KD6WKY

April shows bring May flowers if you live in the Midwest. Here we've had those flowers for six weeks. What April brings to us as radio amateurs is opportunity to participate in community service and opportunity to get together with radio amateurs from around the world face to face.

The Vaca Valley Radio Club will again participate in the March of Dimes walk, details are in the newsletter. I have participated in this activity in the past along with many of you. I find it interesting to see what equipment everyone brings to Lagoon Valley for the event. Everything from HT's to beams come out of those cars when set up begins.

I know Chris Jones KD7TQO uses the cross band repeat feature in his mobile set up inside that red truck. He also has a pretty cool 2m/70cm beam he erects using push poles and a big hollow plastic base that he fills with water as a mounting point for the pole set up. Chris had this set-up at the bike event last year and helped the RACES guys be able to use a few of the repeaters they needed to make the bike ride work.

If Jim Larsen W2DY shows up he has his personal vest devise that works well with his HT's. It sort of reminds me of the tankers holster I used to carry my 9mm pistol back in the day. Only instead of a pistol, in the slot, there is a radio, easy and right out front ready to grab when the call comes.

In April several members also attend the DX Convention in Visalia. This year the convention is sponsored by the Southern California DX Club. I attended the convention last year for the first time, I had a blast! This year I plan to go to Visalia on Friday, stay through Sunday and take in the whole thing. Maybe I'll get lucky and win one of the big raffle prizes. For more information about the DX Convention go to: http://www.dxconvention.org

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I know it's only April, but we only have this month and next month to discuss Field Day. The June club meeting is typically a little looser and involves pizza. Larry Hogue W6OMF has extended an invitation to the club to use his property as our Field Day Site. I have accepted his generous invitation. We will not be operating a Field Day station from City Hall Park this year.

What this means is we can operate later into the evening without worrying about the neighbors or the city bugging us about being out so late. We'll have plenty of shade, lots of space for field antennas, and still have easy access for anyone that wants to work a radio or just stop by for a hot dog and soda.

This year the ARRL website has a link to a Field Day Station Locator.
http://www.arrl.org/contests/announcements/fd/locator.php
This URL lets you use Google maps to find our Field Day station just by typing in the word "Vacaville." Click on the red dot and all the contact information regarding this Field Day station appears to the right of the map. Go check it out.

Let's pencil this gig out and see what we can field for our station this year. My goal is to get more people to sit down behind the microphone and make some contacts. The more operators we have the more fun we'll have.

This year I'll be providing computer logging again and possibly the ability to connect to the internet and do some station spotting via a few spotting networks. I'm sure that would be interesting to anyone that looks at it.

We need to discuss at this meeting if we want to send any postcards like we did last year. Now is the time to nails this stuff down.

See you at the club meeting everyone! 73!

Free Lunch!

FREE LUNCH (April 19) Yes, there is such a thing as a free lunch. Not only is the lunch free, but there is a free continental breakfast and a free T-Shirt as well. You get all this and have a lot of fun as well just by providing communications for the March of Dimes annual 5 and 10 K walk.

This year, the walk is called "Walk for Babies". It will be held Saturday, April 19 at Lagoon Valley Park. Net control

will start at 0700, but if you get there any time before 0800 you will have time to get your T-Shirt and have something to eat before going out to one of the places on the walk's course. The net frequency will be 147.51Ø MHz. All you need to bring is a handheld tuned to that frequency. An earphone or speaker/mic is highly recommended. If you don't have a radio, loaner radios will be available. We hope to see you there!

Wireless Telephone Laws FAQs

Two new laws dealing with the use of wireless telephones while driving go into effect July 1, 2008. Below is a list of Frequently Asked Questions concerning these new laws.

Q: When do the new wireless telephone laws take effect?
A: The new laws take effect July 1, 2008

Q: What is the difference between the two laws?
A: The first prohibits all drivers from using a handheld wireless telephone while operating a motor vehicle. (Vehicle Code (VC) §23123). Motorists 18 and over may use a hands-free device. Drivers under the age of 18 may NOT use a wireless telephone or hands-free device while operating a motor vehicle (VC §23124).

Q: What if I need to use my telephone during an emergency, and I do not have a hands- free device?
A: The law allows a driver to use a wireless telephone to make emergency calls to a law enforcement agency, a medical provider, the fire department, or other emergency services agency.

Q: What is the fine(s) if I'm convicted?
A: The base fine for the FIRST offense is $20 and $50 for subsequent convictions. With the addition of penalty assessments, the fines can be more than triple the base fine amount.

VACA VALLEY RADIO CLUB—2008 ELECTED OFFICERS

President: Jerry Olive, KD6WKY
Vice President: Mike Vieira, W6MAV
Secretary: Skip Larson, AF6HC
Treasurer: Bob Hewitt, K6HEW

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Director: Mike Carney, N6SEE
Director: Chris Jones, KD7TQO
Director: Antonio Del Rio, N6ZGB
Director: Tom Christman, KE6MDM
Director: Clyde Hood, WH6AB

APPOINTED POSITIONS

Net Control Chairperson: Jerry Olive, KD6WKY
Activities Chairperson: Clyde Hood, WH6AB
Newsletter Editor: Jerry Olive, KD6WKY
Newsletter Publisher & Distributor: Bob Hewitt, K6HEW

Q: Will I receive a point on my driver license if I'm convicted for a violation of the wireless telephone law?
A: No. The violation is a reportable offense, however, DMV will not assign a violation point.

Q: Will the conviction appear on my driving record?
A: Yes, but the violation point will not be added.

Q: Will there be a grace period when motorists will only get a warning?
A: No. The law becomes effective July 1, 2008. Whether a citation is issued is always at the discretion of the officer based upon his or her determination of the most appropriate remedy for the situation.

Q: Are passengers affected by this law?
A: No. This law only applies to the person driving a motor vehicle.

Q: Do these laws apply to out-of-state drivers whose home states do not have such laws?
A: Yes

Q: Can I be pulled over by a law enforcement officer for using my handheld wireless telephone?
A: Yes. A law enforcement officer can pull you over just for this infraction.

Q: What if my phone has a push-to-talk feature, can I use that?
A: No. However, the law does provide an exception for those operating a commercial motor truck or truck tractor (excluding pickups), implements of husbandry, farm vehicle or tow truck, to use a two-way radio operated by a "push-to-talk" feature.

Q: What other exceptions are there?
A: Operators of an authorized emergency vehicle during the course of employment are exempt as are those motorists operating a vehicle on private property.

DRIVERS 18 AND OVER

Drivers 18 and over will be allowed to use a hands-free device to talk on their wireless telephone while driving. The following FAQs apply to those motorists 18 and over.

Q: Does the new "hands-free" law prohibit you from dialing a wireless telephone while driving or just talking on it?
A: The new law does not prohibit dialing, but drivers are strongly urged not to dial while driving.

Q: Will it be legal to use a Blue Tooth or other earpiece?
A: Yes, however you cannot have BOTH ears covered.

Q: Does the new hands-free law allow you to use the speaker phone function of your wireless telephone while driving?
A: Yes.

Q: Does the new "hands-free" law allow drivers 18 and over to text page(?) while driving?
A: The law does not specifically prohibit that, but an officer can pull over and issue a citation to a driver of any age if, in the officer's opinion, the driver was distracted and not operating the vehicle safely. Text paging(?) while driving is unsafe at any speed and is strongly discouraged.

DRIVERS UNDER 18

Q: Am I allowed to use my wireless telephone hands free?
A: No. Drivers under the age of 18 may not use a wireless telephone, pager, laptop or any other electronic communication or mobile services device to speak or text while driving in any manner, even hands free. EXCEPTION: Permitted in emergency situations to call police, fire or medical authorities (VC §23124).

Q: Why is the law stricter for provisional drivers?
A: Statistics show that teen drivers are more likely than older drivers to be involved in crashes because they lack driving experience and tend to take greater risks. Teen drivers are vulnerable to driving distractions such as talking with passengers, eating or drinking, and talking or texting on wireless devices, which increase the chance of getting involved in serious vehicle crashes.

Q: Can my parents give me permission to allow me to use my wireless telephone while driving?
A: No. The only exception is an emergency situation that requires you to call a law enforcement agency, a health care provider, the fire department or other emergency agency entity.

Q: Does the law apply to me if I'm an emancipated minor?
A: Yes. The restriction applies to all licensed drivers who are under the age of 18.

Q: If I have my parent(s) or someone age 25 years or older in the car with me, may I use my wireless telephone while driving?
A: No. You may only use your wireless telephone in an emergency situation.

Q: Will the restriction appear on my provisional license?
A: No.

Q: May I use the hands-free feature while driving if my car has the feature built in?
A: No. The law prohibits anyone under the age of 18 from using any type of wireless device while driving, except in an emergency situation.

Q: Can a law enforcement officer stop me for using my hands-free device while driving?
A: No. For drivers under the age of 18, this is considered a SECONDARY violation meaning that a law enforcement officer may cite you for using a **hands-free** wireless device if you were pulled over for another violation. However, the prohibition against using a **handheld** wireless device while driving is a PRIMARY violation for which a law enforcement officer can pull you over.

The two laws were the result of SB 1613 and SB 33, authored by Assemblyman Joe Simitian (D) and signed into law by Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger ® in September 2006.

Editor's Question—Does this new law prevent me from using my 2m/70cm mobile amateur radio?

Invitation to VOMARC Hamfest

We would like to invite the members of Vaca Valley Radio Club to the Valley of the Moon Amateur Radio Club (VOMARC)Hamfest on May 3rd (8am to 1pm) in beautiful Sonoma.

Activities include a swap meet, VE session, breakfast, fox hunt and a lot friendly folks.

Go to our website, www.VOMARC.org for more info, flyer and a map or e-mail us. Let us know if you got this message OK.

Also, we can e-mail you a flyer, it you would like one. Hope to see you there.

Vaca Valley Radio Club Meeting Notes of Wednesday, 12 March, 2ØØ8

Club President Jerry Olive (KD6WKY), called the March, 2ØØ8, general membership meeting of the Vaca Valley Radio Club to order at 1935 hours, with the following members in attendance:

Jerry Olive	KD6WKY	Mike Vieira	W6MAV
Skip Lawson	AF6HC	Bob Hewitt	K6HEW
Antonio Del Rio	N6ZGB	Tom Lisch	N6AJR
Clyde Hood	WH6AB	Kim Ware	KI6JNX
Tom Christman	KE6MDM	Chris Jones	KD7TQO
Cliff Beck	K6HIH	Allan Johnson	KI6KCQ

We were also pleased to welcome Doug Ellis (KI6MWR), and

THE VVRC WELCOMES YOU

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Wheelchair accessible

Visit the Repeater online courtesy of Bob K6HEW at:
http://users.cwnet.com/hewbob/vvrc
Club repeater in Vacaville:W6VVR 145.470 MHz(-) pl 127.3
Additional local repeaters
WV6F 224.200(-) WV6F 440.025(+) WV6F 1291.900(-)

Lt. Rusty Thompson, US Army – who was home on leave from Iraq, as our guests for the evening.

Since no changes were necessary to the Feb. meeting notes, it was motioned/seconded and voted to accept the notes as published in the newsletter.

Our Treasurer, Bob (W6HEW), reported that we presently stand at: $994.55 in the General fund; $7Ø1.47 in the Repeater fund; $61.ØØ in the Prize fund.

OLD BUSINESS: Mike (W6MAV), revisited the subject of our summer stand-down for the months of July and August. A motion was made to continue the meetings through the summer, taking advantage of the good weather and daylight by incorporating such fun events as a family bar-b-q's, or pizza shop gatherings, etc. This was seconded/approved.

NEW BUSINESS:

Bob (K6HEW) reminded us of the need for a locking file cabinet to store our gear in. Since the VVFD has already approved our keeping a cabinet in the building, we just needed to get serious about purchasing the unit. He had done some preliminary shopping and found that it would cost about $120 for what we needed, but Skip (AF6HC) said he could provide a locking file cabinet that met the requirements - in exchange for a new call badge. The offer was accepted by the members.

Our activities Chair - Clyde (WH6AB) reminded the membership that the annual *March of Dimes* walk event is tentatively scheduled for Sat., April 19, and they could sure use our support again this year! At this writing, we're surmising that we'll probably have a "show-time" of Ø7ØØ that morning, and those participating will get breakfast and lunch. Hey guyz – this is for a good cause, so please try to set aside this date if you can. More info to come.

Mike (W6MAV) and Bob (K6HEW) shared with the group that we had an antenna/station moving party to move Mike's 220 (W6BRA) repeater to Larry's (W6OMF) home QTH. This new location seems to be working out much better, providing better accessibility from a greater area.

Jerry brought up the subject of this year's Field Day 'Ø8, and presented a Power Point show consisting of some photos that he had taken of one of the proposed sites that he, Skip (AF6HC), and Jerry (KG6TT) had visited the previous week - high atop the ridge above the prison.

Skip then presented a (all tongue-in-cheek of course…) Power Point show of another "proposed" site which was – literally - sitting high on a rocky mountain top in the middle of NOwhere!

Anyone got any better ideas? Please get in touch with your board members and let's check it out and present it to the membership! Remember – our participation in Field Day '08, (June 28 & 29), is a club event – which includes ALL of us! It'll take all of us to make it a success. Besides – the more folks that show up, the more fun it is!

We concluded the evening by holding two drawings: The "evening's drawing" was won by Bob (K6HEW), and the second drawing for a donated bottle of Gallo's finest (thanks to Tom – N6AJR) was won by Cliff (K6HIH).

So, once again, with the cookies and coffee all gone and no further business to conduct, the meeting was adjourned at 2Ø4Ø hr.

Respectfully submitted,

"Skip" Lawson AF6HC

Spirit of Knoxville Launch

(Mar 10, 2008) -- The trans-Atlantic balloon flight of the *Spirit of Knoxville IV* is set to launch March 11 at 0200 UTC (10 PM EDT March 10).

The balloon, designed to stay aloft for more than 24 hours, will be inserted into the current jet stream at normal flight altitudes of 30,000-40,000 feet. This will take the balloon into Europe over the UK and France at around 40 hours into the flight if all goes well. Using radio frequencies, the balloon transmits data detailing its current location, distance traveled, speed, height and health of the balloon.

The balloon's payload consists of hand-made computers and radios along with a GPS and self-authored software. The onboard computer gathers information from the GPS like altitude, speed and temperature; the computer then determines whether it needs to drop weight to maintain its altitude and sends this information, via Amateur Radio frequencies, to volunteers around the globe. Track the mission live (the live status page will only become active at launch).

Flight radio details will be available on the Distributed Tracking and Relay Client (DTRC) status page that opens when you run the current version of DTRC. This software is designed to allow you to track long duration Amateur Radio balloon flights.

You will become a remote RTTY telemetry receiver for balloon flights, connecting your radio to UTARC through the Internet. The DTRC is a RTTY decoder program that automatically forwards received data to UTARC. You can download DTRC free from the DTRC Web page.

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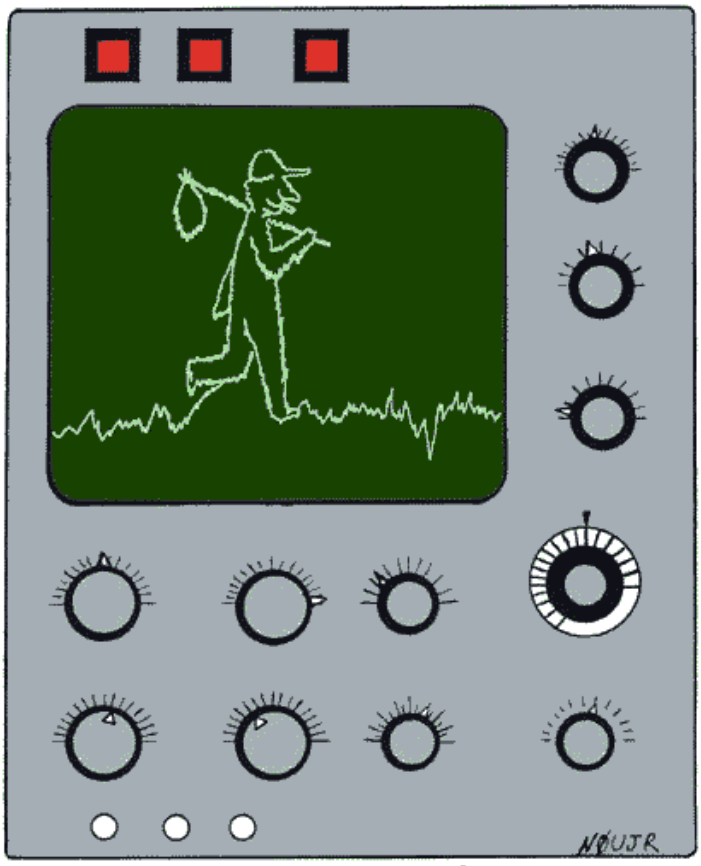
red. Set your rig's volume to a low level (less than 25% of maximum) and adjust your waterfall and *sound card* levels for good contrast. Do not *overdrive* your sound card! Get the background noise and the transmit trace well defined and separate. Keep in mind that how your waterfall looks does not impact decoding, but it is harder to work it if you can't see it.

Use UPPER CASE characters sparingly. Lower case text in PSK31 *varicode* transmits fewer bits of data. You'll increase transmit speed and improve the likelihood of proper decoding on the other end by using lower case text as much as possible. (For example, the difference between a lowercase "e" (11) and an uppercase "E" (1110111) is three times more bits.)

Enable your RF attenuation and increase the volume. This can help keep a strong signal from wiping out the weaker ones. Attenuation will probably be around 20 dB, but by dropping the noise level, the signal readability may improve. AGC (Automatic Gain Control) does nothing for a weak signal; it only levels the louder ones.

Consider dual monitors (most modern video cards have two jacks). This allows you to have the waterfall or spectrum display on one screen and your logger, text window, etc on the other. It makes a huge difference in speed and ease-of-use when you don't have to swap between screens or use smaller windows for your contact.



A digital storage oscilloscope records a 16 nanosecond AC line transient.

PLEASE RENEW YOUR MEMBERSHIP

VACA VALLEY RADIO CLUB, INC.

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION / RENEWAL FORM

Please Print & Fill in Completely

Dues are delinquent January 1st

Name: _____ Call Sign_____
Street: _____
City: _____Zip: _____
Phone: (_____) _____-_____OK to Publish ?(_____)
License Class: _____ ARRL Member ?(_____)
E-Mail Address_____

FAMILY Member (Spouse or Children)

Name: _____ Call Sign_____
License Class: _____ARRL Member ?(_____)
Name: _____ Call Sign_____
License Class: _____ARRL Member ?(_____)
Name: _____ Call Sign_____
License Class: _____ARRL Member ?(_____)

MEMBER Dues --------- $15.00 _____
Each Family Member -- $ 2.00 _____
Student ---------- $ 5.00 _____
Repeater/Autopatch donation --- _____
Call/Name badge -------- $10.00 _____
Optional ARRL membership
ARRL dues ---------- $39.00 _____
ARRL dues (Senior) ---- $36.00 _____
Senior is 65 yr or older with one time proof on age.

Total ---------- _____
Paid by CASH: ____ Check #_____

Mail to : Vaca Valley Radio Club, PO Box 143, Elmira, CA 95625-0143